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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Memorandum

Detente and Vigilance: Uneasy Coexistence in Moscow

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
15 February 1972

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Detente and Vigilance: Uneasy Coexistence in Moscow

The past few months have been a time of stress for Soviet leaders. This has probably helped produce a series of phenomena inimical to US-Soviet relations and to the program of detente enunciated by party chief Brezhnev last spring. Beginning in late 1971, the Soviets launched a campaign of internal vigilance and discipline, sharpened criticism of US foreign policies, and sanctioned harassment of US citizens in the USSR, including a military attaché and a congressman. The recent untoward events stem largely from Moscow's growing apprehension over President Nixon's approaching trip to Peking and strains engendered by his planned visit to Moscow. This does not mean that Brezhnev's policies of detente are in jeopardy. Indeed, these policies and Brezhnev's leading role in their enunciation have been underlined in Soviet media since the beginning of the year, leaving no doubt that his views constitute the foundations of current Soviet policy. But some of the recent events and themes may be in part the handiwork of Brezhnev's conservative critics, and therein lies the potential for detente to go awry.

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Vigilance and Discipline

1. After the announcement last October that President Nixon would visit Moscow, the Soviets began to play down issues straining US-Soviet relations. Simultaneously, Moscow began to tailor its comments on US-Chinese relations to avoid blatant abuse of Washington. The tone was a mixture of optimism and caution, emphasizing the need for normalization of US-Soviet relations, but without discounting the many differences and obstacles that could hamper such a development.

2. A discordant note was struck early in November when Politburo member and Ukrainian party boss Shelest warned against "conciliation" in dealings with the West. Speaking in Kiev, Shelest dwelt on the bogey of subversion from abroad and on the attendant need for discipline and conformity at home. The thrust of his speech called into question the soundness of detente policies. Shelest is no newcomer to an obstructionist role. Earlier he had appeared to be in opposition to the regime's policies toward West Germany and the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks.

3. Shelest also was in the forefront of a wave of anti-Zionist propaganda that started in the Ukraine last autumn. In December, this anti-Zionist drive was subsumed in a broader campaign for vigilance and discipline against subversion from the West, particularly the US. The crackdown was heralded most authoritatively in an article in the Central Committee journal Party Life. The article incorporated the narrower attack against Zionism and nationalism, but it concentrated on alleged subversive activities of the CIA, USIA, Radio Liberty, Radio Free Europe, NTS (the Russian emigre organization) and even the Republican Party in the US. The same article stressed the need for vigilance and warned Soviet citizens against passing information to foreigners traveling "in the guise of" diplomats, tourists, businessmen, and scientists.

4. Subsequent propaganda combined both themes in a broader attack on US policies. On 13 January, for example, a writer in Pravda alleged the US wants

-2-

SECRET

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to split East European countries from the socialist world, and to employ Maoists in its struggle against Communism. He charged that nationalism was an American weapon against socialist countries, citing counter-revolutionary actions and disorders in Croatia as an example of how the West exploits nationalism.

5. In a related vein, the Ukrainian press on 5 January reopened the subject of an alleged wartime collaborator who is now living in the US. Scoffing at American "democracy," "freedom," and "justice," the article claimed that the Soviet people were astounded and indignant over US protection of the collaborator, and demanded his extradition. On 16 January the newspaper detailed the war crimes of additional collaborators said to be living in the US.

Propaganda Translated into Action

6. Against this propaganda backdrop the authorities undertook, or at least sanctioned, a series of actions against Soviet and American citizens. On 5 January an American military attaché was roughed up at the public airport in Riga. On the same day, the trial of V. Bukovsky, a prominent member of the dissident movement and one of its principal contacts with Western newsmen, opened and closed in Moscow. Bukovsky received a harsh 12-year sentence on charges of working to "undermine and weaken Soviet power," including an attempt to smuggle printing equipment into the country and encourage army personnel to disobey orders. The blistering press denunciation of Bukovsky warned others of the dangers of contacts with Western correspondents.

7. Congressman Scheuer was briefly detained by police on the evening of 12 January while attending a dinner party at the home of a computer expert, Aleksandr Lerner. Lerner had recently been stripped of his professorship, dismissed from all posts, and expelled from the Communist Party after applying to emigrate to Israel. On 14 January the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, citing "improper activities" on Scheuer's part, demanded that he leave the country immediately, even though he had planned to depart in a couple of days anyway. On 17 January, Izvestia

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scathingly attacked Scheuer and two members of his group charging them with a variety of "subversive activities," including participation in "conspiratorial-instruction meetings" with Soviet citizens and distributing religious literature. Scheuer was accused of following instructions of US "special services" and seeking "slandorous information" from V. N. Chalidze, a founder of the unofficial Committee for Human Rights in the USSR.

8. A new series of investigations and arrests of Moscow dissidents and Ukrainian nationalists began on the day Scheuer was detained. Police arrested seven Ukrainian nationalists in Lvov and several more in Kiev. On 15 January the apartments of historian Petr Yakir, a leader of the dissident movement in Moscow, and seven or eight other Moscow dissidents were searched. Police detained a Western correspondent as he left Yakir's apartment the next day and then barred the door to other newsmen. On 17 January the police arrested astronomer Kronid Luibarsky in Moscow. On 18 January, they searched the apartment of the noted Ukrainian author Viktor Nekrasov in Kiev. On 19 January they arrested eight more Ukrainian nationalists in Kiev. A report that a sociology teacher was arrested in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 14 January suggests that police action may have extended well beyond Moscow and the Ukraine.

9. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and his latest novel, August 1914, were publicly criticized on 12 January, even though it has been Soviet practice generally to ignore Solzhenitsyn. The article stressed the use that foreign enemies were making of the novel and described the wealthy, bourgeois life the Solzhenitsyn family led in the Caucasus before the revolution.

10. Beyond the sweep of the vigilance campaign, authorities responded to attacks on Soviet officials in the US by instigating a new wave of telegrams and telephone calls to American diplomats in the USSR protesting the activities of the Jewish Defense League. Beginning on the evening of 31 December, the messages threatened harm to American personnel in the USSR unless effective measures were taken to curb the league's harassment of Soviet officials in the US. A few telegrams drew a link between President Nixon's trip to

-4-

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the USSR and the need to control the Jewish Defense League's activities. Moscow had previously registered its concern over the league through diplomatic channels but had generally refrained from threats of retaliation or extensive publicity of incidents.

Attacks on US Policies

11. Other occasions for vituperation against the US arose during December and January. The Indo-Pakistani war and the bombing raids against North Vietnam in late December provided fresh opportunities to take issue with US policies. December also saw an end to the cautious, wait-and-see attitude adopted by Moscow after the announcement last summer of President Nixon's visit to Peking. Until then, the Soviets had given only light treatment to the turmoil in the Chinese leadership. The Indo-Pakistani war and the coincidence of US and Chinese policies on the subcontinent prompted some of the stiffest Soviet commentary against China in years.

12. At first, Soviet criticism of Chinese policy on the subcontinent included only brief mention that the Chinese had sided with the US at the UN. But before long, Moscow let loose a broadside at China's alleged support of all aspects of US foreign policy, charging that the coincidence of US and Chinese positions in the struggle against Bangladesh was matched by similar common views on the Middle East, Indochina, Africa, and Latin America. Izvestia on 11 January, for example, claimed that intensification of US aggression coincided with a drawing together of Washington and Peking, which "recognize the parallel nature of their interests." Two days later Pravda denounced the US and China for conspiring to form a bloc against the Soviet Union.

Counterpoint: Soviets Troop to Washington

13. But even in the midst of these unpropitious developments in December and January, there were many indications that the Kremlin wanted to limit the impact of its propaganda and to pursue high-level, well-publicized contacts with the US. The top Soviet

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leaders did not themselves join the outcry for vigilance, nor did they indulge in inflated criticism of the US. Moreover, the Soviet press generally avoided calling into question the utility of dealing with the US and continued to carry positive accounts of America and the prospects for detente. The press did not report Dr. Kissinger's background remarks about the potential impact on the President's Moscow visit of Soviet actions on the Indian subcontinent, and it has avoided attacking the President personally.

14. In late November the Soviets accorded Secretary of Commerce Stans and a group of American businessmen a warm reception, and official and unofficial Soviet visits to the US proceeded successfully. Agricultural Minister Matskevich toured the US in December, and a trade delegation led by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade, Manzhulo, visited in January. Minister of Culture Furtseva opened a Soviet arts and crafts exhibit in Washington on 12 January and traveled about the country until the 20th. The head of the Central Committee's administrative department, Georgy Pavlov, who is a confidant of Brezhnev's, arrived in the US on 30 January for a 15-day stay as guest of Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin. On a less official plane, the Soviet establishment's poet-radical, Yevgeny Yevtushenko, arrived in January for up to six weeks of travel and television appearances.

Motives and Implications

15. What accounts for these divergencies in Soviet behavior? No single explanation is entirely satisfactory; indeed, there may be no direct relationship between some of the events and propaganda themes of recent months. The domestic vigilance campaign, for example, is not necessarily linked with Soviet propaganda attacks on US policies in South and Southeast Asia. The impetus for sharpened criticism of US foreign policy can easily be found in the events themselves. The new bombings of North Vietnam and the war on the subcontinent dramatized differences between the US and the USSR, and for Moscow they exacerbated the conflict between the

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imperatives for detente with the West and for leadership in the Communist world. Moreover, the Indo-Pakistan war forced the Soviet leadership for the first time to face simultaneous US and Chinese opposition on a matter of international importance. Moscow probably already was finding it difficult to maintain a calm exterior as the President's trip to Peking neared. Thus, while visions of rapprochement between Washington and Peking have spurred Soviet efforts to secure its own relationship with the US, it also has led Moscow to warn that Sino-US ties may threaten the USSR.

16. Similarly, conditions of the moment may have prompted heavier attacks on Zionism beginning last fall. Slurs made on Judaism and on the loyalty of Soviet Jews and the attention given to emigre Jews suggest that Soviet authorities are experiencing some discomfort over the implications of the growing exodus of Jews.

17. But the broader vigilance campaign and the crackdown on dissidents and nationalists are different matters. Certainly such affairs as Bukovsky's trial and moves against Ukrainian nationalists had been long in preparation, at least in some quarters.

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18. The leadership may have sanctioned the broader vigilance campaign as a sort of preparation for expanding US-Soviet contacts and the President's visit. A parallel might be drawn with the rash of articles stressing vigilance that precedes each summer tourist season. Thus, a harsher propaganda line and a crackdown on dissidents might be expected before such an exceptional event as a visit by the US President and serve, as a natural concomitant to detente, to reassert the regime's ideological fidelity and to warn the populace not to expect any relaxation of internal controls.

-7-

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19. Whatever the immediate causes, the intrusion of harsher themes at home and in US-Soviet relations reflects the conflicting aims--or "contradictions," as the Communists would call them--in current Soviet foreign and domestic policies. The regime has moved toward political detente with the West with no intention of relaxing either its ideological hostility toward the West or its internal controls. The lessons of Czechoslovakia are not forgotten. Even those who are most eager to improve relations with the West probably acknowledge that it is necessary to keep the lid on at home. Reassertion of the principle of ideological hostility toward the West is dictated by the Soviet Union's undiminished interest in maintaining its control over Eastern Europe and leadership of the Communist world. Continued warnings about Western, as well as Chinese, schemes to dismember the "socialist camp" betray Soviet sensitivity on this score. An important element in Moscow's detente policy is its desire to regulate Communist approaches to the West so that other Communist countries will be unable to pull ahead of the USSR.

The Conservative Needle

20. Inconsistencies in policy may be a product not only of contrasting needs felt by the leadership, but also of conflicting views within the leadership. It is no secret that some Soviet leaders and various interest groups in the USSR take a suspicious view of detente with the West. Evidence of this repeatedly turns up in Soviet commentary on such matters as relations with West Germany and the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks.

21. A matter as important as President Nixon's trip to the USSR almost certainly has brought out differing views within the Soviet leadership, if only on the seemliness of an invitation so soon after his trip to China was announced. Those who supported the President's visit to the USSR probably would prefer to play down tensions in US-Soviet relations. Others, concerned from the beginning over the warming trend in Soviet relations with the West, probably prefer to highlight the potential of ideological contagion

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and see US gestures toward China, and the coincidence of US-Chinese policies on the Indian subcontinent, as confirmation of their worst fears.

22. Although recent propaganda and incidents inimical to better Soviet relations with the US are not completely their doing, conservative elements in the leadership probably have encouraged such developments, where possible, in hopes of spoiling the atmosphere for detente. Ideological and vigilance themes have always been favorites of the conservatives, who employ them not just as antidotes to contact with the West but to undermine the policy that fosters such contact.

23. Hostile intent is evident in some of the incidents of recent weeks. Pravda Ukrainy's attacks on the US for harboring war criminals is typical of the kind of barbs that Ukrainian leaders and the press directed at West Germany as its relations with the USSR improved. The assault on the American attaché in Riga was clearly a provocation, although of a type that recurs periodically. The episode of Congressman Scheuer is a more complicated matter. He and his party seem to have acted with considerable boldness and at a time when the authorities were preparing for a round-up of dissident elements. For their part, the Soviets seemed intent on creating an embarrassing scene. They put the delegation under unusually heavy surveillance from the beginning, and, considering the status of the group, they could have avoided expulsion and vicious public attacks.

24. Beyond the question of motives, developments of the past two months demonstrate how events in one arena of Soviet national policy can influence those in another; thus a crackdown in domestic affairs can put a different light on foreign policy. There is always the possibility in the USSR that hostile acts and propaganda will escalate out of the bounds first set by the leadership and spill over into other areas of policy. Given the strong conservative forces in the USSR, the possibility of

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a serious challenge to detente would become very real should a major setback, such as West German failure to ratify its treaty with the USSR, occur.

The Leadership Balance

25. Whether this will happen ultimately rests on the balance of forces within the leadership and the dynamics of leadership politics. These are always obscure, but in this case the problem is simplified to the extent that Party Chief Brezhnev has publicly become the leading champion of detente, while at least one other member of the Politburo, Ukrainian Party Chief Shelest, can be tagged as an outspoken opponent.

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27. As Brezhnev has embraced the policy of detente, Shelest has preserved the hard-line attitude he displayed in the Czechoslovak crisis of 1968. He has also come into conflict with Brezhnev on other political and policy matters. But his present position illustrates the weakness of the conservatives, at least on the question of detente. Shelest's political standing has become decidedly more precarious, and he is open to some challenge himself for tolerating nationalists in the Ukraine. His attack on Zionism and bourgeois nationalism may have been designed in part to cover his own vulnerabilities. Ironically, the crackdown on dissidents--at least potentially an irritant in relations with the West--was to the extent that it involved Ukrainian nationalists, a political embarrassment to Shelest, a bitter foe of the West.

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28. Meanwhile, Brezhnev's authority is at a peak. The enhancement of his position and the Soviet Union's approach to the West are long-term, carefully fostered goals that have already weathered periods of trial. President Nixon's trip to Peking and the presidential visit to Moscow will further test the leadership's commitment to present policies. The strains these events are causing already have produced discordant notes; more are likely in the future. For now, however, the dominant line in Soviet foreign policy is detente, and there is no evidence of a concerted effort to close the openings to the West.

-11-

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